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The priest and the
novelist

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THE PRIEST AND THE NOVELIST:

A REQUIEM.

WITH A PREFACE ON

WILLIAM M. THACKERAY

AND

FREDERICK WM. FABER.

“ Your fathers, where are they ? and
the prophets, do they live for ever ? ”

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR BY C. DARVEAU,
No. 8, Mountain Hill, Quebec.

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PREFACE.

Seldom has England had to mourn the loss of so many gifted sons, in such quick succession, as within the past twelve months. The last day of the first month of 1863 beheld a vacant place among her patrician veterans, by the death of the aged Marquis of Lansdowne. A few weeks after, Sir James Outram, and a few months after that, Lord Clyde, bade farewell to a grateful country and a great life. It is not our province to speak of the deep historic memories with which such names were linked. They are fresh in many hearts. Nor has the British Army alone had cause for mourning. Between the deaths of these two great commanders, the Dark Shadow had fallen on our Senate, and one of England's wisest statesmen and Oxford's deepest scholars—Sir George Cornewall Lewis—had ‘fallen asleep.’ The Church

was not to escape the Reaper's sickle. She must put on her sable as well as other professions. The famous Richard Whately, Archbishop of Dublin,—he whose constant prayer was that God would take his life before his reason—may stand as the representative of the Church's losses.

The two great men whose untimely death forms the subject of the following little poem, come under a different category from any we have named, nor indeed, except as great masters, in separate ways, of the English language, have they any relation to each other. Each had his own line and each excelled in it. Their themes were distant as the poles. The Priest wrote of theology, and Christ, and heaven: the Novelist of the world, and all the actors on its stage. One wrote of abstract holiness and harmony: the other of concrete misery, weakness and discord. The points of contact between them are the unrivalled greatness of each in his own department of literature, and their deaths in the prime of manhood, nearly at the same time. In the thoughts of the writer—who prints his lines from no vain idea of their possessing literary excellence, but as a memorial of minds he

loved—they were blended by the memory of quiet, happy hours spent upon the works of both.

THACKERAY, abandoning the Bar, deemed painting his vocation. How many other men in like manner have misjudged the End to which they were born! His failure was his success; it guided him to his true mission. He would never have attained great eminence as an artist, but he became speedily the facile princeps of English satirists. All England mourns for him, for it may well be doubted if the same rare combination of powers is likely to shine forth again in any one man for many a long year to come. Certainly, it would be hard to point out his equal among English writers of fiction in times gone by. Fielding, whom perhaps he most resembled,—greatly human and heartsearching as his humor was—cannot, we venture to think, compare with Thackeray. He was Addison in Addison's happiest mood of sly, delicious wit and satire. He was the Roman Juvenal attuned to modern times. He was Swift without his coarseness and spleen. He was Johnson without his dictionary and bombast and ‘sesquipedalia verba.’ In a word, his was true

genius, and that must ever be scarce. No number of mere talents will form an equation with this mysterious power. They are the *wood*, but this is the *fire* under !

It is not always that the great novelist is also the moral philosopher. But Thackeray was a great moralist; and the charge brought against Bulwer's novels, cannot be alleged against his. He, as a novelist, is what Hogarth was as a painter and one may truly say, both of the canvass of the one and the pages of the other, that they preach sermons far more persuasive and eloquent, than those generally delivered from the pulpits of churches. Thackeray has been sometimes accused of morbid and uncharitable views of society and its members. The same charge might be made with as much justice against Hogarth, nay even against Shakspeare. It is not always pleasant to see one's own face in a glass that does not flatter, but shows us our ugliness. Truth is sometimes very painful, yet real charity must be based upon truth. Men admire 'the whited sepulchre' and would rather not think of what is inside it—yet the bones and the uncleanness are there nevertheless. The question is,

—were Thackeray's portraits true *likenesses*? We think they were, and if so we must not grumble that we are not pretty to look upon. Perhaps some of his critics found his photographs *too* life-like. But when he exposed falseness, hypocrisy, and empty show, there were deep moral lessons in his analysis, and a sad pity even in his most scathing words. He believed in a basis of truth, and love, and lasting reality underlying all, and when he wrote of misfortune, bereavement, suffering and death he drew honest tears from every honest heart.

Like all great and successful men he had many haters, as well as many lovers. He who plays Polonius, and gets nightly stabbed, envies Hamlet when he 'brings down the house.' The pygmies of literature hated the giant. But this is all *en règle* and scarcely needs a word. Thackeray was hated, as Micaiah, the son of Imlah, was hated because he did not 'prophesy good' concerning his haters, but 'evil.' Therefore the snobs hated him, and the hypocrites hated him, and Dives hated him—but Lazarus loved him, for he was the poor man's friend !

The following is from *Punch*: "While generous

“ tributes are everywhere paid to the genius of him
“ who has been suddenly called away in the fulness
“ of his power and the maturity of his fame, some
“ who have for many years enjoyed the advantage
“ of his assistance and the delight of his society would
“ simply record that they have lost a dear friend.....
“ Let the brilliancy of his trained intellect, the terrible
“ strength of his satire, the subtlety of his wit, the
“ richness of his humor, and the catholic range of
“ his calm wisdom, be themes for others; the mourn-
“ ing friends who inscribe these lines to his memory
“ think of the affectionate nature, the cheerful com-
“ panionship, the large heart and open hand, the
“ simple courteousness and the endearing frankness
“ of a brave, true, honest gentleman whom no pen
“ but his own could depict as those who knew him
“ would desire.”

And Charles Dickens writes with simple pathos:
“ On the table before me there lies all that *he* had
“ written of his latest and last story...In respect of
“ earnest feeling, far-seeing purpose, character, ear-
“ nestness and a certain loving picturesqueness
“ blending the whole, I believe it to be much the

" best of all his works...It contains one picture which
" must have cost him extreme distress, and which
" is a masterpiece. There are two little children,
" touched with a hand as loving and as tender as
" ever father caressed his child with. There is
" some young love as pure and innocent, and as pretty
" as the truth." The last words Thackeray himself
corrected in this story were : " And my heart throb-
bed with an exquisite bliss." " God grant," adds
Dickens, " that on that Christmas Eve when he laid
" his head back on his pillow and threw up his arms
" as he had been wont to do when very weary, some
" consciousness of duty done and Christian hope
" throughout life humbly cherished may have caused
" his own heart *so* to throb when he passed away to
" his Redeemer's rest."

FREDERICK WILLIAM FABER was a priest of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri. He had formerly held a Rectory in the Church of England, and been a Fellow of University College, Oxford. But like Dr. Newman, Archdeacon Manning and many other eminent clergymen, the Church in which he was bred failed to satisfy the special tendencies and yearnings of his

nature. As there are many persons who can receive Christianity only through the medium of Calvinistic Fatalism, so are there other minds, of a far higher order, who can receive it only in symbol and in mystery. To them the enthusiasm of Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier, the miracles of Saints and the sufferings of martyrs have a logic more convincing than didactic articles and cold definitions. And such was Faber. He had a painter's eye, a poet's imagination; and seemed to mount, as on an Eagle's wings, to the bright sunmit of the Holy Mountain. Angels seemed to wait upon his summons and to shed light over his pages. His last work was "*Bethlehem*" and it is his masterpiece. The writer has no concern with the peculiarities of the Church to which he belonged; he is not a member of it, nor have its ritual and its dogmas any special attractiveness to his mind. But Dogmatic Theology was not Faber's province. In the crucible of his soaring spirit points of belief melted into pathetic mysteries, and he reproduced them as a system of divine music and poetry.

As a writer of pure, transparent English, he may take place with De Quincey; there is no Blair's rhe-

toric in his utterances; no superfluous word ever checks the clear flowing of his stream. He never stagnates; his is living water.

A prophet is not without honor save in his own country. Faber's works are probably better known and his genius more truly estimated on the Continent and in America than in England, his own fatherland. It is a pity that prejudice should so warp right reason, as to make men think that their own Jerusalem alone is the place where men can worship "in spirit and in truth." That faith must be very languid and that intellect very weak, which is afraid of a great and beautiful book because its author belongs to a different Society in Religion. "The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans,"—the ultra-protestant and the ultra-montanist has each his "index expurgatorius" and all beauty seems deformity, all greatness degradation, all sublime thought the very bathos of nonsense, when existing on the other side and viewed from the opposite banks of bigotry. Meanwhile, the River flows calmly on between. It is, however, passing strange that those who profess to be members of an intitution whose shining lights were

such men as Jeremy Taylor, Andrewes, Barrow, Bull, Hammond, Wilson and Butler, should feel more at home in the company of Dr. Cumming or Mr. Spurgeon than with intellects of such a catholic lustre as Newman's and Faber's. Certainly there is but little in their formularies to justify such a preference. But when weary of the pseudo-prophetic vials of Cumming and the clamorous reprobation of Spurgeon, they might do worse than spend an hour with Faber's Bethlehem. Our own love and admiration for Faber had nothing to do with opposing systems. It was but the natural homage of the mind before a superior power. It was literary, not theological.

As master-spirits, as representative men, and as standard writers we have blended in our humble tribute of song the names of the Priest and the Novelist.

REQUIESCANT IN PACE.

W. H.

1 D'Auteil Street, Quebec,

March, 1864.

THE PRIEST AND THE NOVELIST :

A REQUIEM.

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A REQUIEM.

Two glorious souls are gone
To the last bourn :
Two mighty workmen sleep
In Death's great deep :
Two shadowy figures stand
On the far Land.

Silent each thrilling voice
That made my heart rejoice,
Or only mourn :
“ Philip, thou too must die ”—
We may not strive nor cry,
Yet we must breathe a sigh
That they are gone.

Each was a Priest of God
And taught the flock :
Each had a mystic rod
And smote the rock.
Each won an honored name
High in the lists of Fame,—
Best prize that earth can give—
A name to live.

'Twas not at evening time
Their sun went down :
They heard Death's mournful chime
In the full golden prime
Of high renown.

Vacant their place below,
Yet in the golden glow
Of Heaven's own light,
Those shining spirits move
Among the stars of love,
Forever bright.

O Priests, I reach my hand,
Into the shadowy land
To feel you near !
Faber and Thackeray !
Ever on life's dark way
I hold you dear.

One was the Priest of Man,
Beneath whose withering scan
Earth's shams lay bare ;
He from his censer threw
Incense that traversed through
Its murky air.

He showed the world's great Fair
Of Vanity :
Ever his chiefest care
To crush a lie.

His was the voice that told
Its tinsel was not gold
 But only dross :
His were the scales to weigh
The false, the fair, the gay,
 Men's gains and loss.

False ones ! hang down the head,
You cannot harm the dead
 Nor steal his crown :
He dwells upon a shore
Where lying lips no more
 Can cry him down.

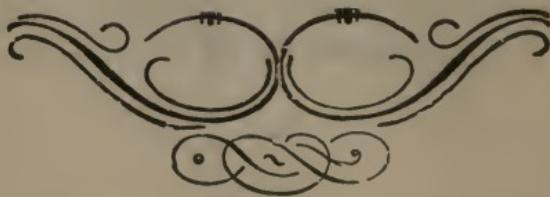
Great heart and mind, Farewell !
No lay of mine can tell
 Thy virtues all :
But noble souls and true
Have paid the tribute due
 To our great Juvenal.

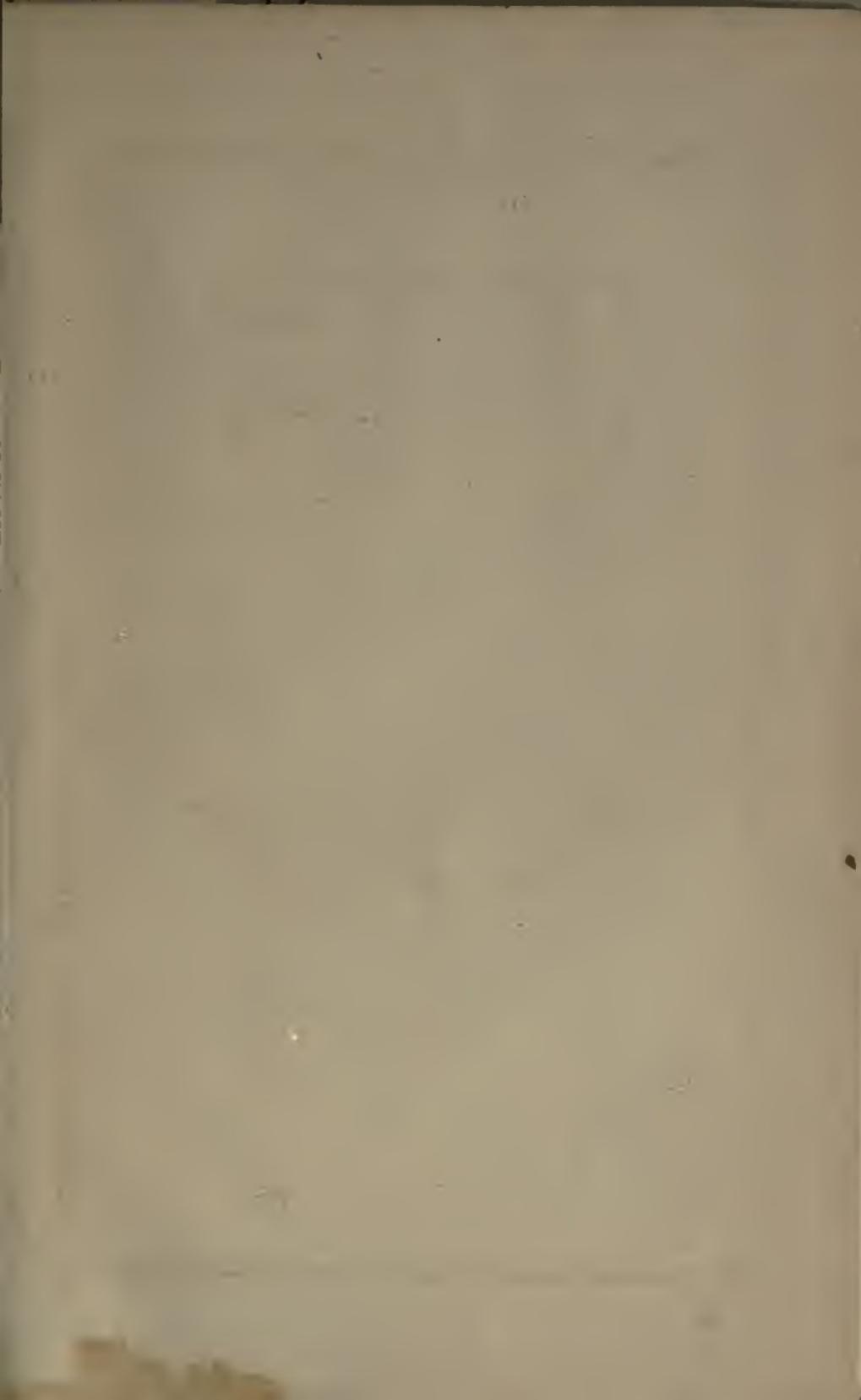
Faber, Saint Philip's son,
Thy shortened work is done
 Thou too dost rest !
Thou walkest on the sea
Of Upper Galilee—
 Sleep on its breast !

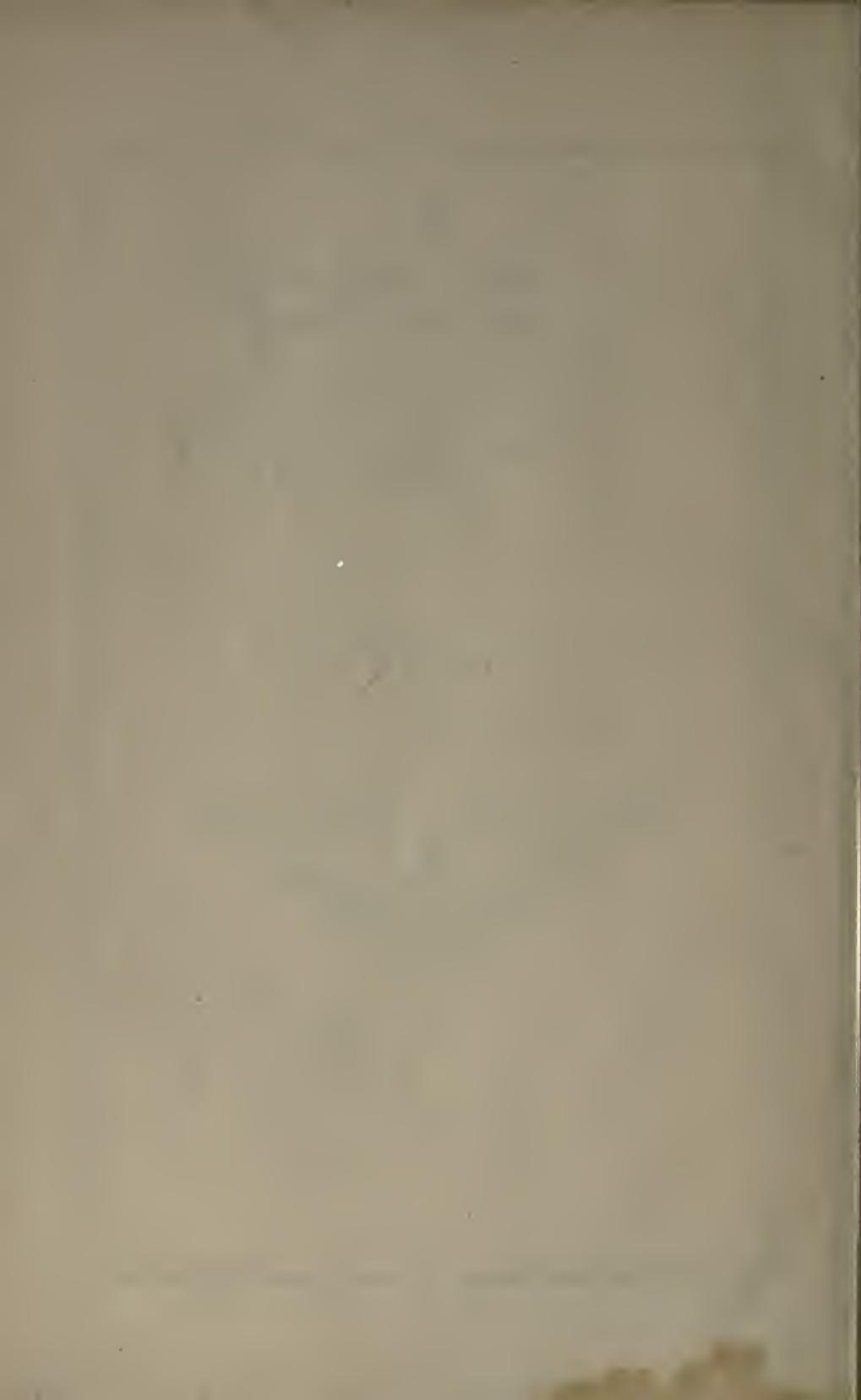
Was e'er our English tongue
More sweetly, softly sung
 To thoughts of heaven ?
And to its silvery stream
Was e'er a brighter gleam
 Of beauty given ?

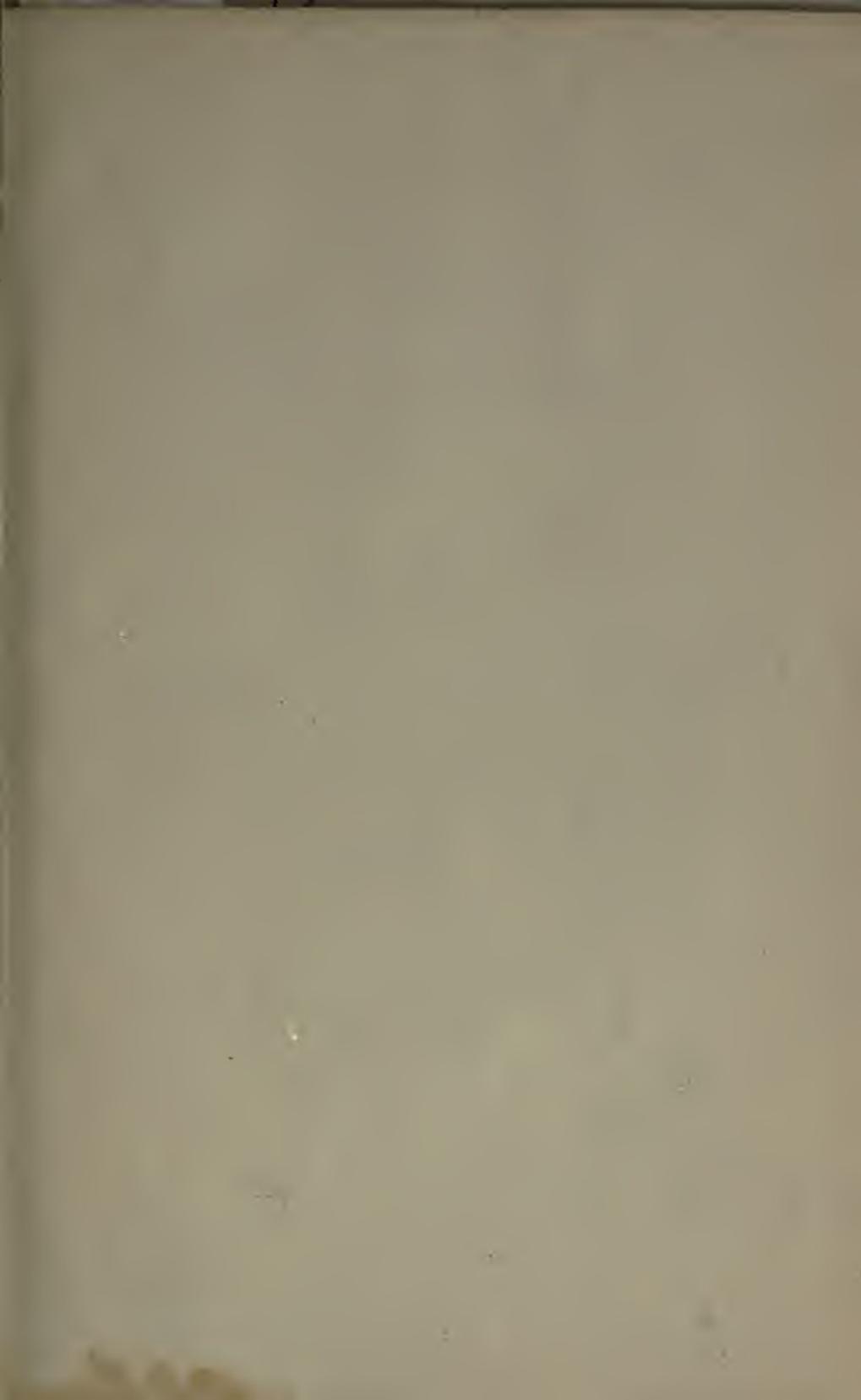
Sweet was each pensive hour
When I have owned thy power
 And prized each gem
Of living thoughts that shine
In every page of thine,
 O Priest of Bethlehem !

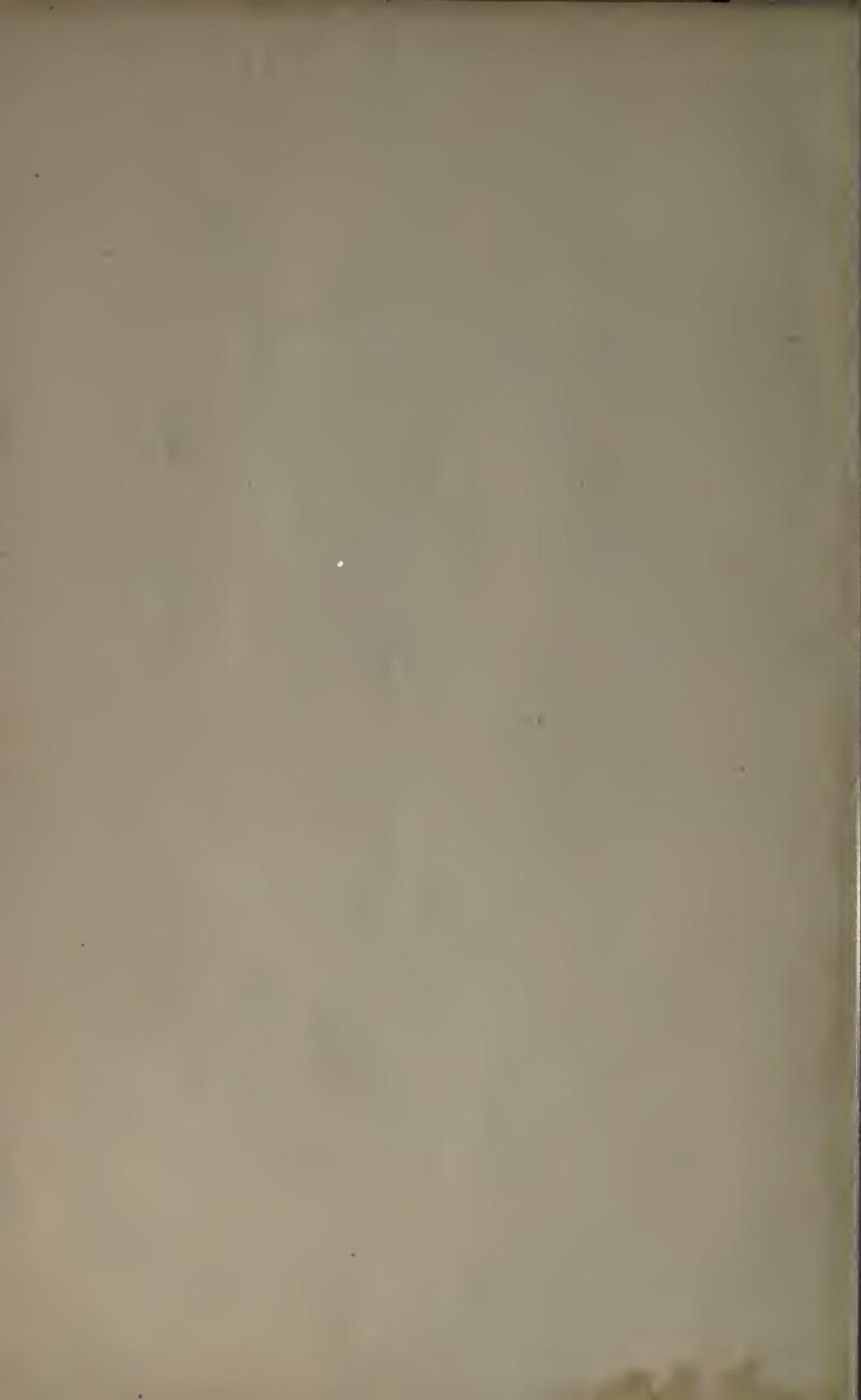
Into the Shadowy Land
I stretch my trembling hand
 To feel you near !
Ever through life's brief day,
Faber and Thackeray,
 I hold you dear !

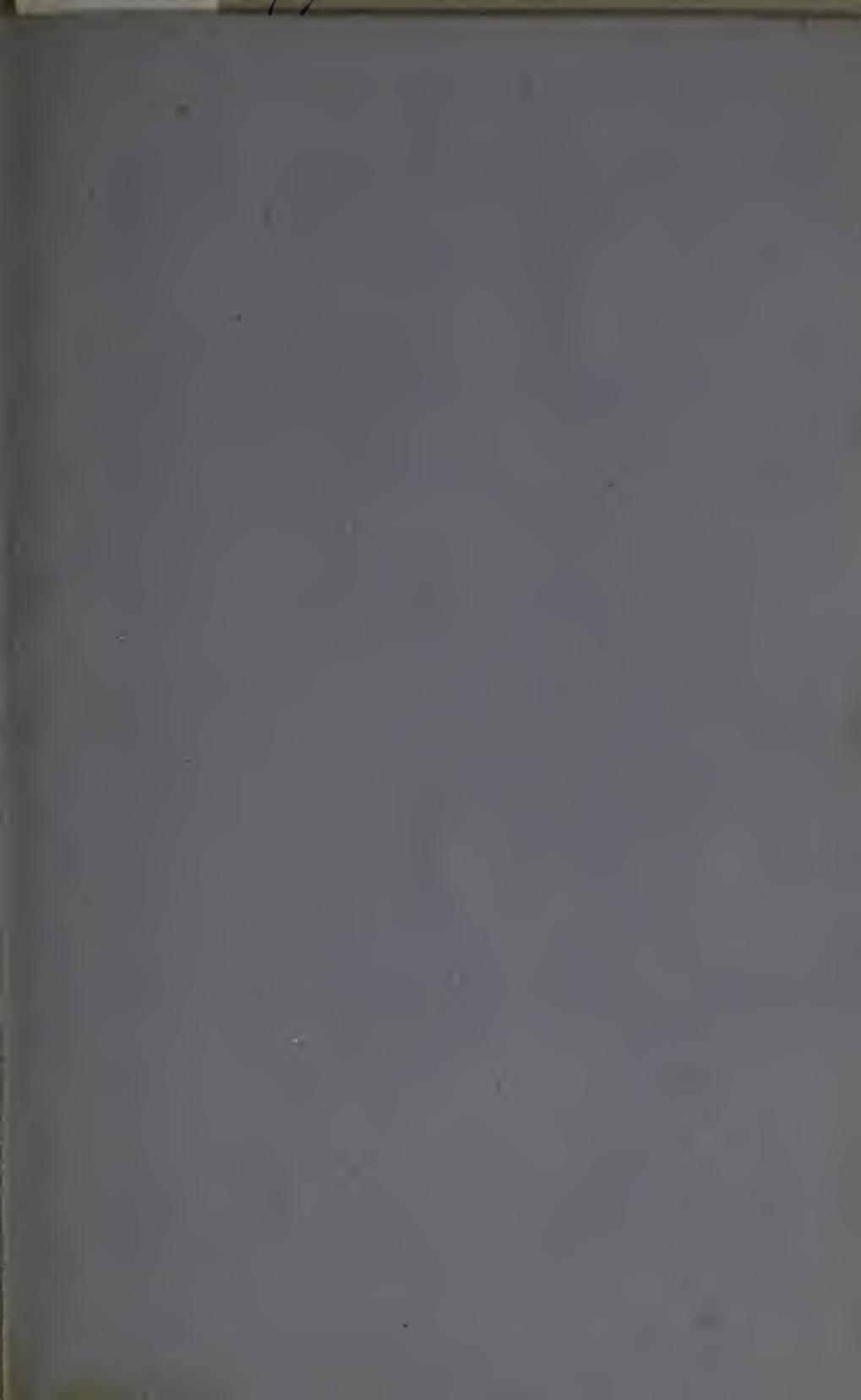


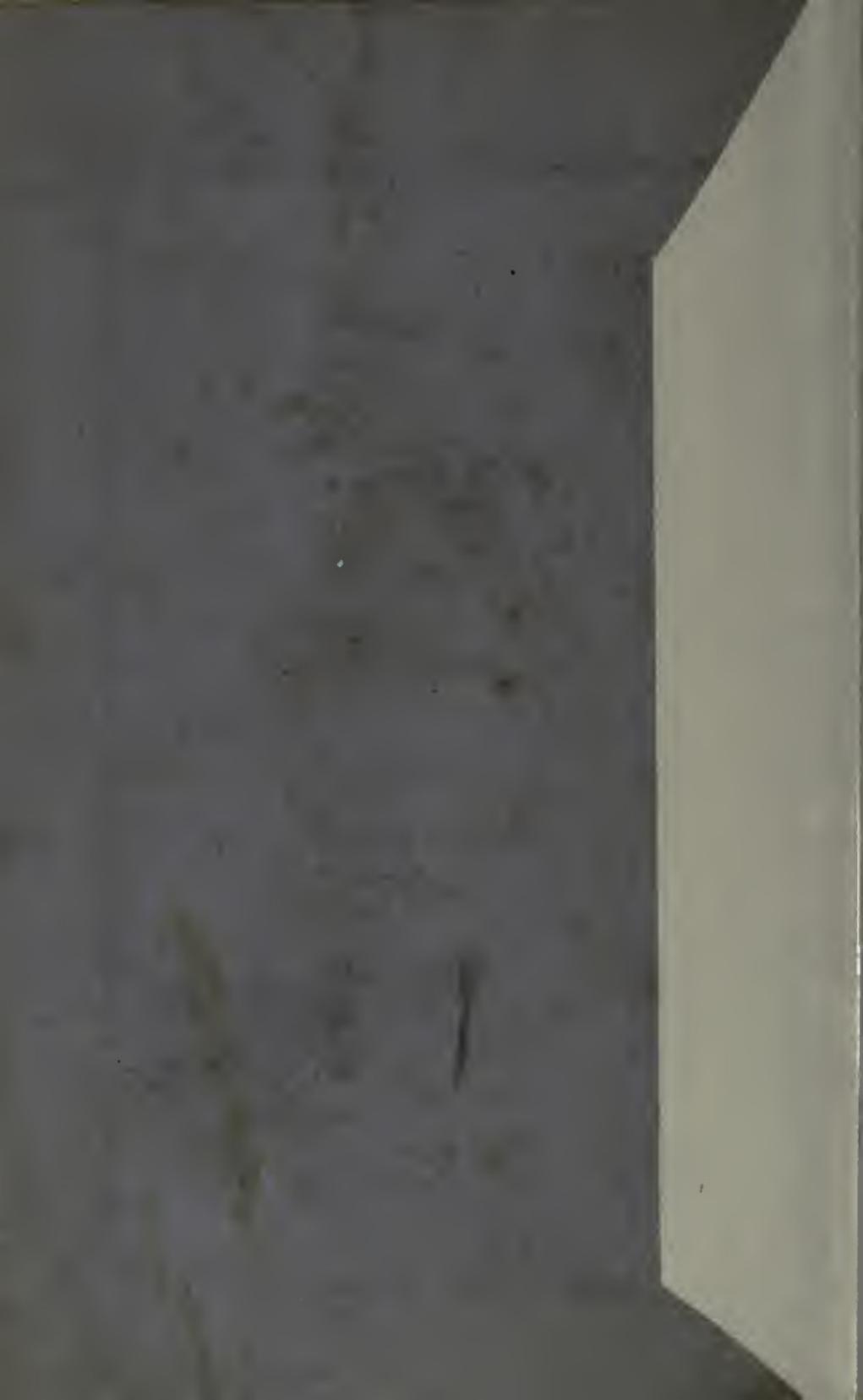












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